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SUBJECT: POLISH PARLIAMENTARY LEADER: "COMMUNICATION" KEY  
TO GOOD RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ashe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Newly elected Chairman of the Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee Andrzej Halicki (Civic Platform, PO) told the Ambassador July 28 that communication between the U.S. and Poland was key to maintaining excellent bilateral relations. His remark came in the context of prospective ratification of the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA) and the supplemental Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). In this connection, Halicki said Poles eagerly awaited the results of the U.S. review of missile defense policy and foresaw no problem with ratification of either agreement, which he thought would pass with wide margins. Halicki went on to assert more broadly that Polish officials in both the executive and legislative branches of the government welcomed close cooperation and dialogue with the U.S. on a variety of issues. In particular, Halicki hoped to expand contacts between the Sejm (Parliament's lower chamber) and the U.S. Congress.

¶2. (C) A primary goal of Halicki's chairmanship is formation of a sub-committee focused on "eastern" issues, including implementation of the EU's Eastern Partnership. He did not offer details but expected a small group of 6-8 deputies to coordinate closely with GOP officials, as well as with their Sejm colleagues and the members of the European Parliament, to ensure that Poland's approach to Russia and other members of the former Soviet Union was balanced and focused on common interests. Halicki also mentioned that he had led a small delegation to Moldova last week to meet with legislative counterparts. While there he participated in meetings with FM Radoslaw Sikorski, who was visiting Moldova at the same time, to encourage Moldovan officials to conduct free, fair, and credible elections 29 July.

¶3. (C) On Polish domestic issues, Halicki related that a growing number of elected officials would like to consolidate future elections in Poland. Currently, Poles voted in separate local, parliamentary, and presidential elections, but this was inefficient, costly, and lowered overall voter turnout. Politicians from across the political spectrum would like to combine the three elections into a single event, but this would require constitutional changes. Nonetheless, Halicki observed that parliamentary elections were currently scheduled for the latter half of 2011, precisely in the midst of Poland's EU presidency. This was a prospect that the PO, in particular, wished to avoid, but he stressed that there were no plans to call early elections. Looking ahead to next year's presidential race, Halicki said there would be no real surprises in terms of the half-dozen or more likely candidates, but he mentioned that leftist parties, in particular, were interested in nominating a woman. PM Donald Tusk would probably be among the candidates

because, according to Halicki, he was bored in his current position and was simply biding his time until he could run for president.

¶4. (C) Halicki predicted that the Sejm would not pass property restitution legislation until 2011 at the earliest. Budgetary constraints and presidential elections would preoccupy the Tusk Government next year, while planning for the EU presidency would consume the government's attention in the run up to 2011.

¶5. (SBU) BIO NOTES: Halicki previously worked for an American public relations firm in the early 1990s and speaks English well. He lived in Mosul, in northern Iraq, for four years during the 1970s because his father, now deceased, worked as an engineer there. He has relatives in Toronto, Canada and has visited the U.S. Halicki seems genuinely interested in forging closer ties to the U.S., particularly with Congress, but, like many Polish officials, seems concerned that the U.S. does not always consider Polish sensitivities.

ASHE